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JCE13 U.S. PTO

# IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Docket No. AUS9-2000-0277-US1

Assistant Commissioner for Patents  
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

Transmitted herewith for filing is the patent application of Inventor(s):

**Luke Matthew Browning, Kenneth Bernard Rozendal and  
Suresh Eswara Warriar**

For: **A METHOD AND APPARATUS TO DEBUG A PROGRAM FROM A  
PREDETERMINED STARTING POINT**

Enclosed are also:

- ☒ 19 Pages of Specification including an Abstract
- ☒ 4 Pages of Claims
- ☒ 4 Sheet(s) of Drawings
- ☒ A Declaration and Power of Attorney
- ☒ Form PTO 1595 and assignment of the invention to IBM Corporation

## CLAIMS AS FILED

FOR	Number Filed		Number Extra		Rate		Basic Fee (\$690)
Total Claims	25	-20 =	5	X	\$ 18	=	\$90.00
Independent Claims	3	-3 =	0	X	\$ 78	=	\$0.00
Multiple Dependent Claims	0			X	\$260	=	\$
<b>Total Filing Fee</b>							<b>= \$780.00</b>

- ☒ Please charge \$780.00 to IBM Corporation, Deposit Account No. 09-0447.
- ☒ The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge payment of the following fees associated with the communication or credit any over payment to IBM Corporation, Deposit Account No. 09-0447. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.
- ☒ Any additional filing fees required under 37CFR § 1.16.
- ☒ Any patent application processing fees under 37CFR § 1.17.

Respectfully

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## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

**1. Technical Field:**

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that allows one to do such things as executing only one program instruction at a time (referred to as "single stepping" the program), determining what the next instruction to be executed is, examining and/or modifying computer register and memory locations, and setting breakpoints at particular locations within the program, whereby computer program execution will continue unimpeded until the breakpoint is the next location in the program that is to be executed by the computer.

However, using prior art debugging systems, the user must step through the entire process until a breakpoint is encountered. While prior art debuggers allow the user to set points at which the process will stop, no technique exists which allows the user to set a state from which debugging will begin. For long-running programs, which crash after several hours of running, the programmer must start from scratch to debug the problem. Therefore, a need exists for a method and apparatus for debugging a program from a predetermined starting point.

Docket No. AUS9-2000-0277-US1

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a new way to use debuggers to debug a program or programs from a predetermined starting point. The entire process state of the process or processes can be saved at any time in the course of a debugging session to a disk file by the debugger through a system call. This disk file is also called a checkpoint file. Now registers or memory may be modified, if necessary, and the program or programs continued. At any time, the current execution of the programs may be terminated and the programs brought back to the same starting point where their state had been previously saved by resuming from the checkpoint file using another system call. Now a new set of registers or memory may be modified and the programs continued again.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The novel features believed characteristic of the invention are set forth in the appended claims. The invention itself, however, as well as a preferred mode of use, further objectives and advantages thereof, will best be understood by reference to the following detailed description of an illustrative embodiment when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

10           **Figure 1** is a pictorial representation of a data processing system in which the present invention may be implemented;

**Figure 2** is a block diagram of a data processing system is shown in which the present invention may be implemented;

**Figure 3** is a data flow diagram of the operation of a debugger with checkpoint/restart facilities according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention

**Figure 4** is a diagram illustrating the components of  
20 a checkpoint file and their relationships in accordance  
with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

**Figure 5** is a block diagram of an exemplary checkpoint file according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention; and

25           **Figure 6** is a flowchart of the operation of a  
debugger according to a preferred embodiment of the  
present invention.

Docket No. AUS9-2000-0277-US1

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

With reference now to the figures and in particular with reference to **Figure 1**, a pictorial representation of a data processing system in which the present invention may be implemented is depicted in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention. A computer **100** is depicted which includes a system unit **110**, a video display terminal **102**, a keyboard **104**, storage devices **108**, which may include floppy drives and other types of permanent and removable storage media, and mouse **106**. Additional input devices may be included with personal computer **100**, such as, for example, a joystick, touchpad, touch screen, trackball, microphone, and the like. Computer **100** can be implemented using any suitable computer, such as an IBM RS/6000 computer or IntelliStation computer, which are products of International Business Machines Corporation, located in Armonk, New York. Although the depicted representation shows a computer, other embodiments of the present invention may be implemented in other types of data processing systems, such as a network computer. Computer **100** also preferably includes a graphical user interface that may be implemented by means of systems software residing in computer readable media in operation within computer **100**.

With reference now to **Figure 2**, a block diagram of a data processing system is shown in which the present invention may be implemented. Data processing system **200** is an example of a computer, such as computer **100** in

Docket No. AUS9-2000-0277-US1

**Figure 1**, in which code or instructions implementing the processes of the present invention may be located. Data processing system **200** employs a peripheral component interconnect (PCI) local bus architecture. Although the depicted example employs a PCI bus, other bus architectures such as Accelerated Graphics Port (AGP) and Industry Standard Architecture (ISA) may be used. Processor **202** and main memory **204** are connected to PCI local bus **206** through PCI bridge **208**. PCI bridge **208** also may include an integrated memory controller and cache memory for processor **202**. Additional connections to PCI local bus **206** may be made through direct component interconnection or through add-in boards. In the depicted example, local area network (LAN) adapter **210**, small computer system interface SCSI host bus adapter **212**, and expansion bus interface **214** are connected to PCI local bus **206** by direct component connection. In contrast, audio adapter **216**, graphics adapter **218**, and audio/video adapter **219** are connected to PCI local bus **206** by add-in boards inserted into expansion slots. Expansion bus interface **214** provides a connection for a keyboard and mouse adapter **220**, modem **222**, and additional memory **224**. SCSI host bus adapter **212** provides a connection for hard disk drive **226**, tape drive **228**, and CD-ROM drive **230**. Typical PCI local bus implementations will support three or four PCI expansion slots or add-in connectors.

An operating system runs on processor **202** and is used to coordinate and provide control of various components within data processing system **200** in **Figure 2**. The

operating system may be a commercially available operating system such as Windows 2000, which is available from Microsoft Corporation. An object oriented programming system such as Java may run in conjunction with the operating system and provides calls to the operating system from Java programs or applications executing on data processing system 200. "Java" is a trademark of Sun Microsystems, Inc. Instructions for the operating system, the object-oriented operating system, and applications or programs are located on storage devices, such as hard disk drive 226, and may be loaded into main memory 204 for execution by processor 202.

Those of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that the hardware in **Figure 2** may vary depending on the implementation. Other internal hardware or peripheral devices, such as flash ROM (or equivalent nonvolatile memory) or optical disk drives and the like, may be used in addition to or in place of the hardware depicted in **Figure 2**. Also, the processes of the present invention may be applied to a multiprocessor data processing system.

For example, data processing system **200**, if optionally configured as a network computer, may not include SCSI host bus adapter **212**, hard disk drive **226**, tape drive **228**, and CD-ROM **230**, as noted by dotted line **232** in **Figure 2** denoting optional inclusion. In that case, the computer, to be properly called a client computer, must include some type of network communication interface, such as LAN adapter **210**, modem **222**, or the like. As another example, data processing system **200** may



Docket No. AUS9-2000-0277-US1

be a stand-alone system configured to be bootable without relying on some type of network communication interface, whether or not data processing system **200** comprises some type of network communication interface. As a further example, data processing system **200** may be a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) device, which is configured with ROM and/or flash ROM in order to provide non-volatile memory for storing operating system files and/or user-generated data.

The depicted example in **Figure 2** and above-described examples are not meant to imply architectural limitations. For example, data processing system **200** also may be a notebook computer or hand held computer in addition to taking the form of a PDA. Data processing system **200** also may be a kiosk or a Web appliance.

The processes of the present invention are performed by processor **202** using computer implemented instructions, which may be located in a memory such as, for example, main memory **204**, memory **224**, or in one or more peripheral devices **226-230**.

The operating system creates software copies of the processor and the memory and assigns them to programs. Each instance of a program executing in memory is called a "process." A program is thus a passive entity, such as the contents of a file stored on disk, whereas a process is an active entity. The process includes the value of the "program counter" specifying the next instruction to execute, the contents of processor's registers, the process "stack," a data section containing global values, and a "user block" which contains information about

opened files and devices, pending signals, signal handlers, etc. The process stack contains temporary data, such as sub-routine parameters, return addresses, and temporary variables. The "process image" defines a process in memory and includes all information about a process as described above.

The operating system will allow a process to create new processes by use of a system call. The relationship between processes is often referred to as the parent-child relationship with the calling process referred to as the parent of the created process, which is called the child process. For example, a word processing program executes in memory as a process. When the word processing process calls a spell checker program, a child process is created whose parent is the word processing process.

The present invention provides a debugger combined with a child process that can be checkpointed and restarted. In a preferred embodiment, the debugger, 20 executing in memory as a process, creates a child process for the program being debugged. The program can then, in turn, create further child processes. The debugger, which is the parent process, has control over the child processes. The debugger of the present invention may 25 save the image of all processes under control of the debugger in a checkpoint file and recreate the image of the processes from the checkpoint file to resume debugging from that state. Thus, the present invention provides a mechanism for resuming debugging from a saved 30 state, allowing the programmer to modify registers and memory variables and resume debugging from a known state.

Docket No. AUS9-2000-0277-US1

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A checkpoint is a snapshot of the image of a process, which is saved on non-volatile storage, such as disk 226 in **Figure 2**, and which survives process failure. The checkpoint/restart facilities save information (i.e.,  
5 checkpoint data) necessary to restart the execution of a process from that point in the program execution at which the information is saved. Upon restart, the checkpointed process may be reloaded into volatile memory, such as main memory 204 in **Figure 2**, and the process can resume  
10 execution from the checkpointed state. Checkpointing reduces the amount of lost work in the event of a process failure because the checkpointed processes only need to be rolled back to the last checkpoint. Even if the processes complete execution normally or are aborted  
15 because of program failure, the processes can be recreated from the image saved in the checkpoint file and debugged from that point instead of starting from scratch.

Processes may be checkpointed and their process  
20 image saved in a checkpoint file even when they are not being traced. The present invention also provides a debugger to recreate processes from the checkpoint file and to start tracing them from the point at which they were checkpointed. This use of a debugger to recreate  
25 processes from a checkpoint file can potentially save a user several hours or even days of debugging efforts to debug a long-running process that crashes after several hours or days of execution if a checkpoint file containing the process image is created on some  
30 interval-basis.

Docket No. AUS9-2000-0277-US1

According to a preferred embodiment of the present invention, checkpoint/restart facilities are used to save the state of a process or processes of a program being debugged to a checkpoint file. At any time, the current execution of the program may be terminated and the program brought back to the same starting point where the state had been previously saved by resuming from the checkpoint file using another system call. Now a set of registers or memory may be modified and the program continued again.

With reference now to **Figure 3**, a data flow diagram of the operation of a debugger with checkpoint/restart facilities is depicted according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention. A debugger **310** controls the operation of a program **320**. Debugger **310** provides a checkpoint/restart facility to save the entire process state of a process or processes being traced including its registers and machine state in a checkpoint file **330**. Debugger **310** also provides a way to read the checkpoint file and create the process image from the data saved in the file and resume the process at the point at which it was checkpointed as a traced process.

The program runs until it reaches a stopped state  
350, when, for example, it reaches a breakpoint set by  
25 the debugger. The entire process image may be saved to  
the checkpoint file. It may be beneficial to permit only  
the debugger to checkpoint a traced process. If any  
process other than the debugger attempts to checkpoint a  
traced process, the call will fail. It may also be  
30 beneficial to allow a debugger process to checkpoint

Docket No. AUS9-2000-0277-US1

processes that are not being traced by it. For example, multiple processes may be included in a checkpoint/restart group and identified through a common checkpoint/restart group ID (CRID), even though the processes are not all being traced by the debugger. Furthermore, it may be beneficial to checkpoint a traced process that is already running, as well as a traced process stopped in the debugger.

The following is an example of some code to checkpoint a process that is stopped in debugger mode which uses the ptrace() system call to communicate between the debugger and the traced process:

```

15      rc = checkpnt("SV.out", id, CHKPNT_NODELAY|CHKPNT_AND_STOPTRC,"SV.err");
      if (rc) {
          printf("Checkpoint failed, errno = %d\n");
          exit(1);
      }

20      /* continue the process to complete the checkpoint request */
      rc = ptrace(PT_CONTINUE, pid, (int *)1, 0, 0);
      if (rc == -1) {
          printf("Continue failed, errno = %d\n", errno);
          exit(1);
      }

25      /* wait for the process to go to the stopped state after checkpoint */
      rc = waitpid(pid, &status, WUNTRACED);
      if (rc != pid) {
30          printf("Wait failed, rc = %d, errno = %d\n", rc, errno);
          exit(1);
      }

      /* Make ptrace requests */
35

```

After the process state is saved in a checkpoint file, registers or variables in memory may be modified and the program is ready to run in state **352**. In state **354**, the program is running and the debugger is debugging the program. At any time, the current execution of the program or programs may be terminated to enter a stopped state **356**, such as at a breakpoint. Thereafter, the

program or programs may be brought back to the same starting point where the state had been previously saved by restoring program data from the checkpoint file using another system call.

```

rc = restart("SV.out", pid, RESTART_AND_STOPTRC, NULL, "SV.err");
10 if (rc) {
    printf("restart failed, errno = %d\n");
    exit(1);
}

15 rc = ptrace(PT_ATTACH, pid, 0, 0, 0);
if (rc) {
    printf("Attach to pid %d failed, errno = %d\n", pid, errno);
    exit(1);
}

20 /* Need to continue the process after attaching to it so that
   * it can run
   */
kill(pid, SIGCONT);

25 /* Let the process get to the stopped state */
rc = waitpid(pid, &status, WUNTRACED);
if (rc != pid) {
    printf("Wait failed, rc = %d, errno = %d\n", rc, errno);
30 }

/* make ptrace requests */

```

Turning now to **Figure 4**, a diagram is shown illustrating the components of a checkpoint file and their relationships in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention. The components of the checkpoint file include a header **402**, which is stored at location 0 (zero), and a process descriptor **404** for each process whose image is saved in the checkpoint file.

Each process descriptor has a data type **406** for each type of data (e.g., process, thread, stack, heap, etc.) associated with the process descriptor. Each data type has at least one instance **408** mapping in file and application. Each instance of a data type has at least one data block **410** of subsystem dependent data.

A person of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that the configuration of the checkpoint file described with respect to **Figures 4** and **5** may vary depending on  
20 implementation. Other components may be used in addition to or in place of the components depicted in **Figure 4**. For example, the debugger may be used to debug a plurality of programs running concurrently. The debugger may also be implemented in a distributed processing  
25 environment. A plurality of debuggers may also be implemented to debug different processes or parts of processes. Furthermore, the checkpoint file in **Figure 5** may also be implemented as another data structure, such as a linked list or database, rather than a flat file.  
30 Also, as mentioned earlier the checkpoint file may be

created even when processes are not being traced, such as when the checkpoint file is created by a non-debugger, in the same format as described above, but used by the debugger in the same way.

If the program is stopped in step **606**, a determination is made as to whether the user wishes to set a breakpoint (step **608**). If the debugger process is to set a breakpoint, the debugger process sets the breakpoint (step **610**) and a determination is made as to whether the debugger process is to save a checkpoint (step **612**). If the debugger process determines that a breakpoint is not to be set in step **608**, the debugger process proceeds directly to step **612** to determine whether a checkpoint is to be saved.

The debugger may set a breakpoint or save a checkpoint in response to an event. For example, the  
30 programmer may instruct the debugger to stop the program,



Docket No. AUS9-2000-0277-US1

set a breakpoint, and save a checkpoint after three hours of running, regardless of the instructions being executed or the state of the processes under the control of the debugger. In this example, the event of three hours of running would indicate to the debugger that a breakpoint is to be set and that a checkpoint is to be saved. The debugger may also be instructed to save a checkpoint periodically or before or after a specific instruction is executed.

10        If a checkpoint is to be saved in step **612**, the debugger saves process data to a checkpoint file (step **614**) and a determination is made as to whether the debugger is to restore the image of the process from a checkpoint file (step **616**). If the debugger process  
15 determines that a checkpoint is not to be saved in step **612**, the debugger process proceeds directly to step **616** to determine whether the image of the process is to be restored from a checkpoint file.

20        If the image of the process is to be restored from a checkpoint file in step **616**, the debugger restores process data from the checkpoint file (step **618**) and a determination is made as to whether the debugger is to modify registers and/or memory variables (step **620**). If the debugger process determines that the process image is  
25 not to be restored in step **616**, the debugger process proceeds directly to step **620** to determine whether registers and/or memory variables are to be modified.

30        The debugger may also restore the image of the process being debugged and modify registers or memory variables in response to an event. For example, the

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Docket No. AUS9-2000-0277-US1

debugger may be instructed to run between a checkpoint and breakpoint repeatedly using a plurality of register or memory variable values and output results.

If registers and/or memory variables are to be  
5 modified in step **620**, the debugger modifies the values (step **622**) and a determination is made as to whether the debugger process is to terminate (step **624**). If the debugger process determines that registers and/or memory variables are not to be modified in step **620**, the  
10 debugger process proceeds directly to step **624** to determine whether the debugger process is to terminate.

If the debugger process determines that debugging is to terminate in step **624**, the debugger process ends. Otherwise, the debugger process continues debugging the  
15 program in a running state in step **604**.

Thus, the present invention provides a way to save the entire process image of a process being traced including its registers and machine state in a file called the checkpoint file. It also provides a way to  
20 read a checkpoint file and to recreate the process image from the state saved in the file and resume it at the point where it was checkpointed as a traced process. A programmer debugging an especially insidious bug has an opportunity to try alternative values for registers and  
25 memory variables and run through the same computation window. The present invention also allows a programmer to debug a problem that may occur after several hours of running without the need to run the program from the beginning every time registers or memory variables are  
30 modified.

Docket No. AUS9-2000-0277-US1

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It is important to note that while the present invention has been described in the context of a fully functioning data processing system, those of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that the processes of the present invention are capable of being distributed in the form of a computer readable medium of instructions and a variety of forms and that the present invention applies equally regardless of the particular type of signal bearing media actually used to carry out the distribution. Examples of computer readable media include recordable-type media such a floppy disc, a hard disk drive, a RAM, and CD-ROMs and transmission-type media such as digital and analog communications links.

The description of the present invention has been presented for purposes of illustration and description, but is not intended to be exhaustive or limited to the invention in the form disclosed. Many modifications and variations will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art. For example, while the description of the invention and any examples herein may be specific to the UNIX operating system, a person of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that the present invention may be implemented in any operating system. The embodiment was chosen and described in order to best explain the principles of the invention, the practical application, and to enable others of ordinary skill in the art to understand the invention for various embodiments with various modifications as are suited to the particular use contemplated.

**CLAIMS:**

1. A method in a data processing system for debugging a process from a starting point, comprising:

- 5           initiating debugging of a process;  
          saving a process state in response to a first event  
to form a stored process state;  
          retrieving the stored process state in response to a  
second event; and  
10          reinitiating debugging from the stored process  
state.
2.   The method of claim 1, wherein the first event occurs  
periodically.
- 15   3.   The method of claim 1, wherein the process state is  
saved in a checkpoint data structure.
4.   The method of claim 3, wherein the checkpoint data  
20   structure is a checkpoint file.
5.   The method of claim 3, wherein the checkpoint data  
structure includes a process descriptor for the process.
- 25   6.   The method of claim 5, wherein the process has  
control over at least one child process and the  
checkpoint data structure includes a process descriptor  
for each of the at least one child process.
- 30   7.   The method of claim 5, wherein the checkpoint data

structure further includes at least one data type descriptor for at least one data type corresponding to the process.

- 5 8. The method of claim 7, wherein the checkpoint data  
structure further includes at least one instance  
descriptor for at least one instance of data  
corresponding to each of the at least one data type.
- 10 9. The method of claim 8, wherein the checkpoint data  
structure further includes at least one data block  
corresponding to each of the at least one instance  
descriptor.
- 15 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step  
of modifying at least one register or memory variable  
before resuming debugging from the stored process state.
11. The method of claim 1, wherein the process state is  
20 saved when the program is in a stopped state.
12. The method of claim 11, wherein the stopped state is  
at a breakpoint.
- 25 13. An apparatus for debugging a process from a starting  
point, comprising:  
a processor; and  
a memory electrically connected to the processor,  
the memory having stored therein a program to be executed  
30 on the processor for performing the following steps:  
initiating debugging of a process;

Docket No. AUS9-2000-0277-US1

saving a process state in response to a  
first event to form a saved process state;  
retrieving the saved process state in  
response to a second event; and  
5 reinitiating debugging from the saved  
process state.

14. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the first event  
occurs periodically.

15. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the process state  
is saved in a checkpoint data structure.

16. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the checkpoint  
15 data structure is a checkpoint file.

17. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the checkpoint  
data structure includes a process descriptor for the  
process.

18. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the process has  
control over at least one child process and the  
checkpoint data structure includes a process descriptor  
for each of the at least one child process.

19. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the checkpoint  
data structure further includes at least one data type  
descriptor for at least one data type corresponding to  
the process.

20. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the checkpoint data structure further includes at least one instance descriptor for at least one instance of data corresponding to each of the at least one data type.

21. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the checkpoint data structure further includes at least one data block corresponding to each of the at least one instance descriptor.

22. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein program further comprises the step of modifying at least one register or memory variable before resuming debugging from the retrieved process state.

23. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the process state is saved when the program is in a stopped state.

25. A computer program product embodied in a computer readable medium for debugging a process from a starting point, comprising:

25       instructions for initiating debugging of a process;  
       instructions for saving a process state in response  
 to a first event to form a saved process state;  
       instructions for retrieving the saved process state  
 in response to a second event; and  
 30       instructions for reinitiating debugging from the  
       saved process state.

Docket No. AUS9-2000-0277-US1

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

**A METHOD AND APPARATUS TO REPEATEDLY DEBUG A PROGRAM FROM  
A KNOWN STARTING POINT**

5

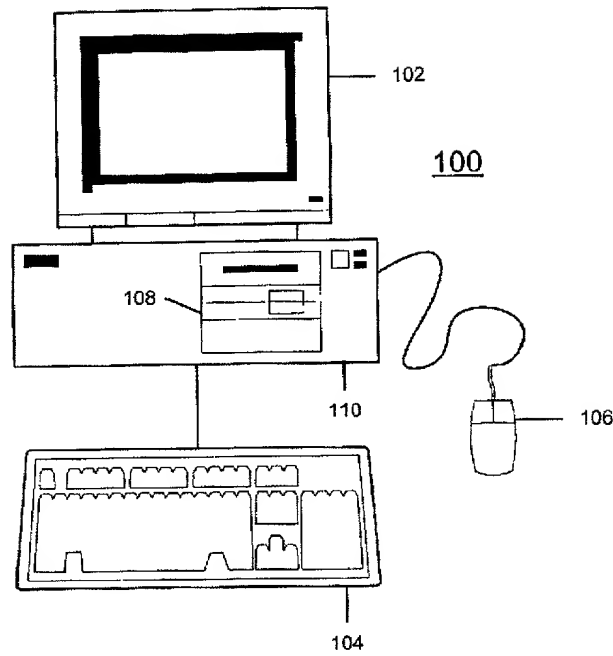
A method and apparatus allow a programmer to repeatedly debug a program from the same starting point. The entire process state of the process can be saved at any time in the course of a debugging session to a disk  
10 file, called the checkpoint file. Now registers or memory may be modified, if necessary, and the program may be brought back to the same starting point where the state had been previously saved by resuming from the checkpoint file. The method and apparatus allow the  
15 state of all the programs to be saved multiple times and resumed from any one of those states. The debugging of a problem is considerably facilitated by not having to start from scratch to debug the problem as the last saved state of the program can be used to start the debugging.

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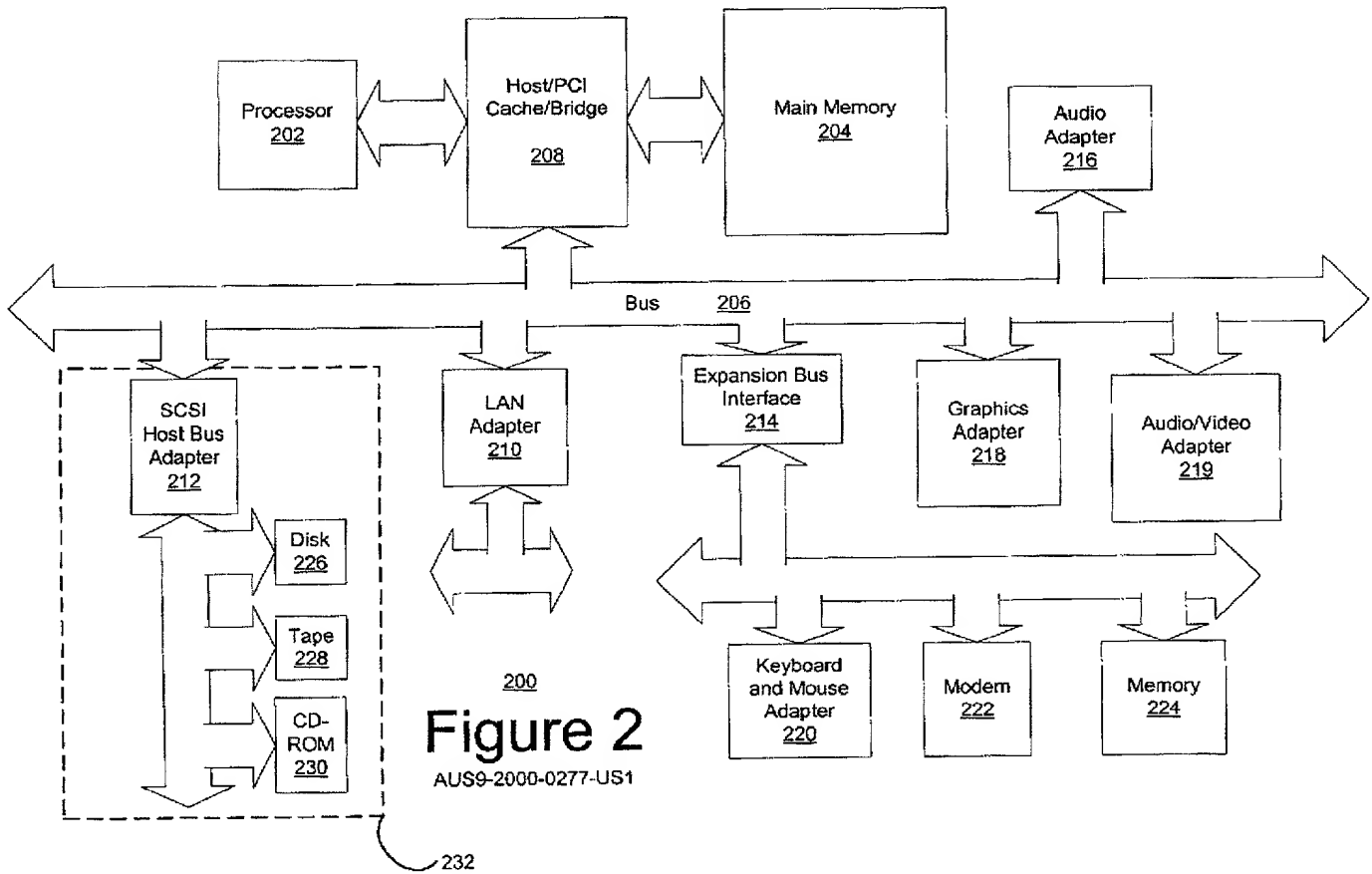


# Figure 1

AUS9-2000-0277-US1



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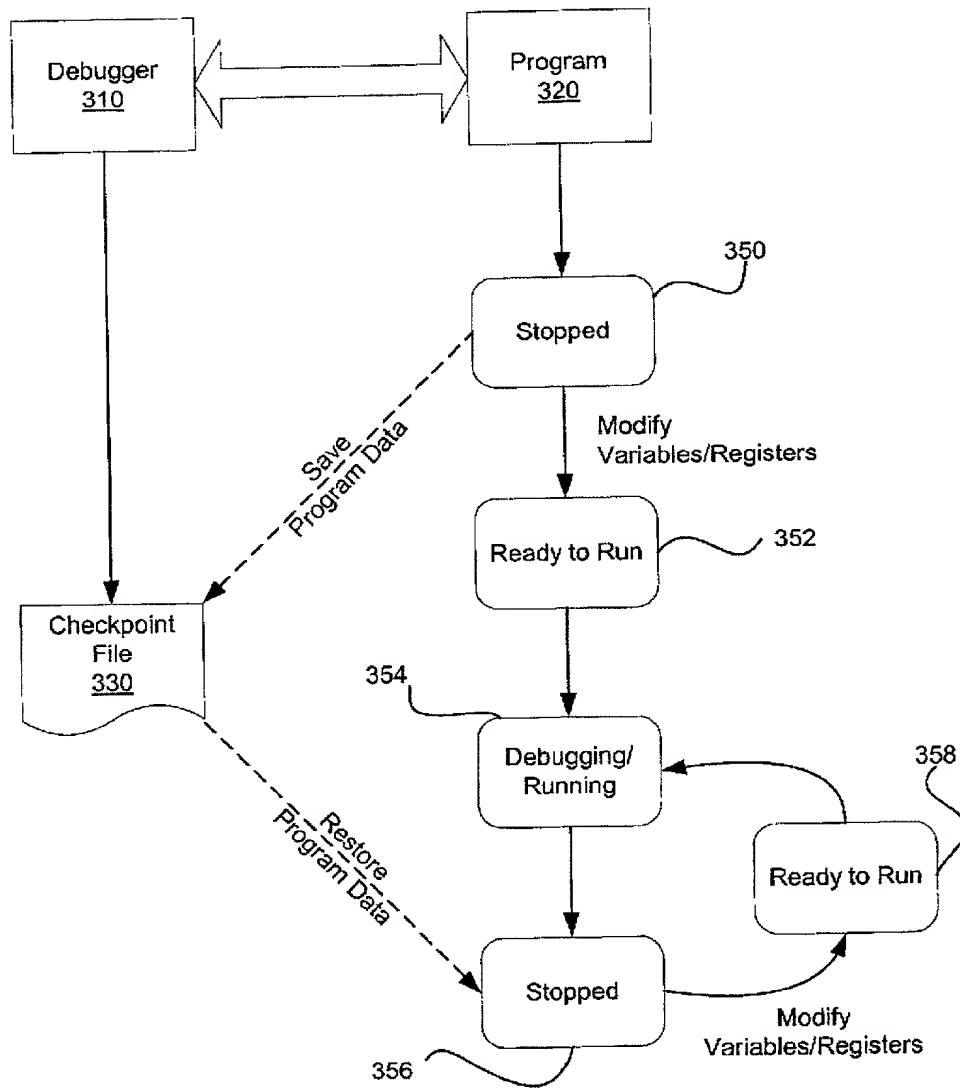


# Figure 2

AUS9-2000-0277-US1

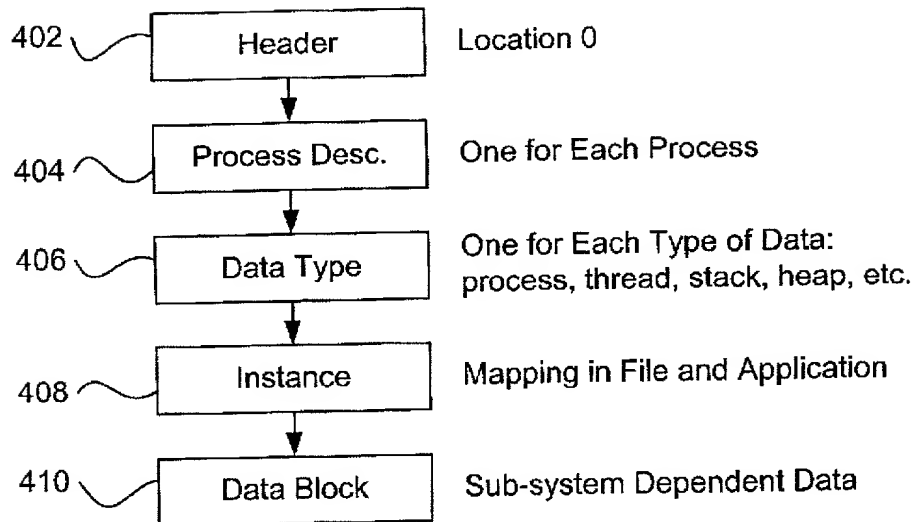
# Figure 3

AUS9-2000-0277-US1



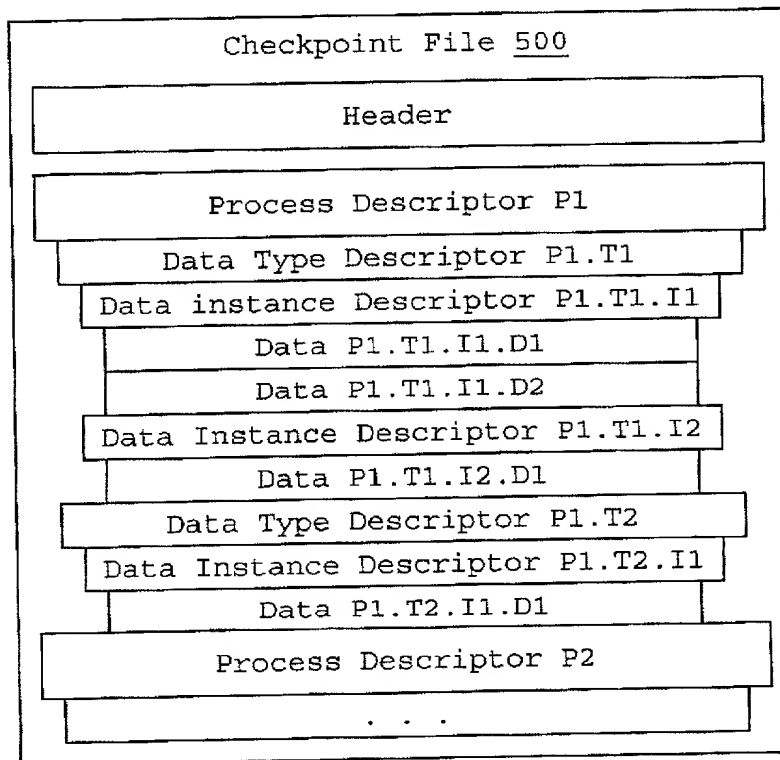
# Figure 4

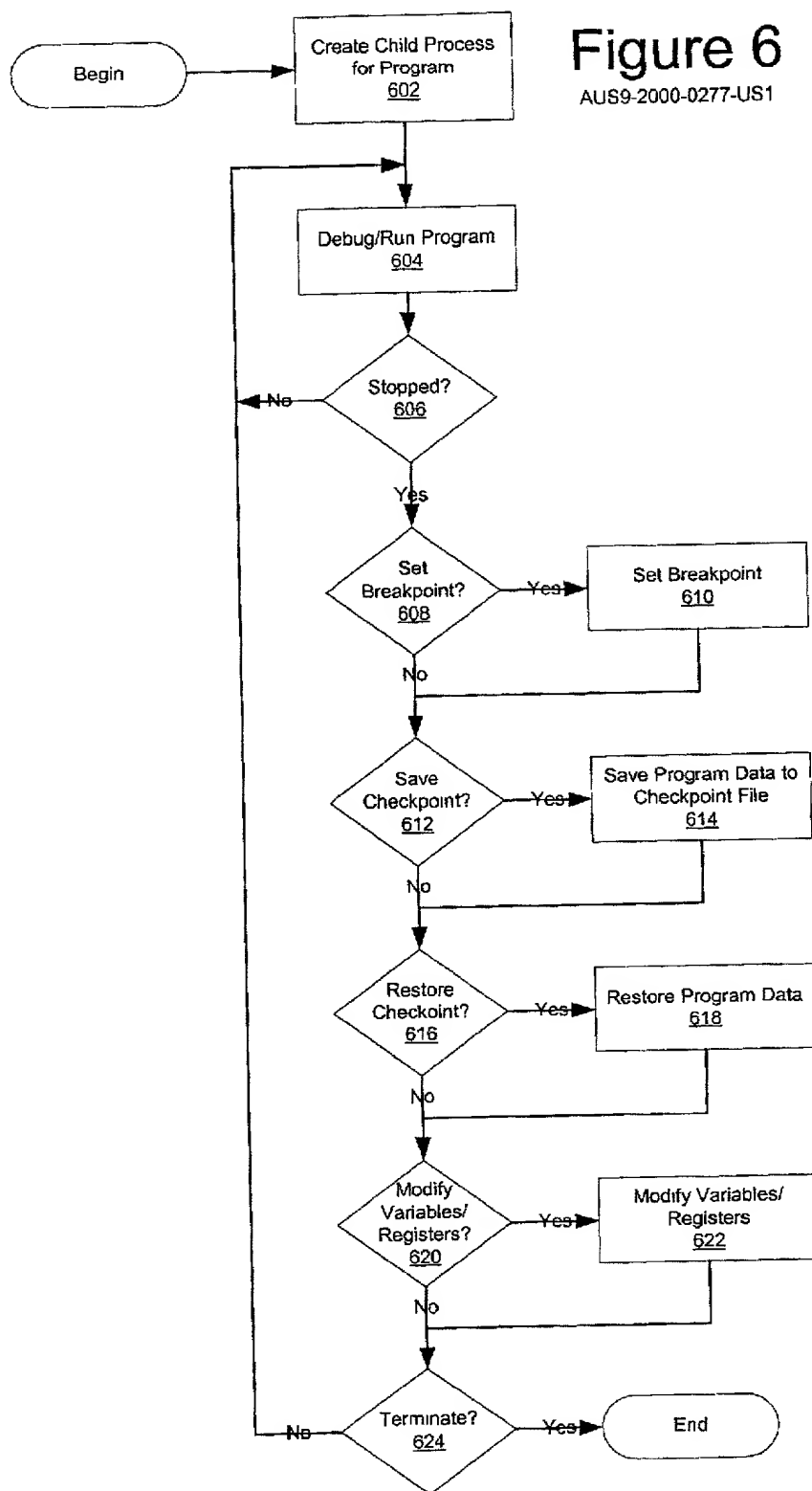
AUS9-2000-0277-US1



# Figure 5

AUS9-2000-0277-US1







true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

POWER OF ATTORNEY: As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorneys and/or agents to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith.

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